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Agenda item 8

ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMISSION ON ITS THIRTY-NINTH SESSION

Draft report

Addendum

Rapporteur: Ms. Selma ASHIPALA (Namibia)

Chapter ___

PROGRAMMING AND COORDINATION MATTERS RELATED TO THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

1. The Commission considered agenda item 4 at the 7th meeting on 20 March 1995. It had before it the report of the Secretary-General on the improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat (E/CN.6/1995/7), and the note by the Secretariat on the proposed programme of work of the Division for the Advancement of Women for the biennium 1996-1997 (E/CN.6/1995/L.3).

2. In introducing the item, the Deputy Director of the Division for the Advancement of Women stated that the current year's focus was limited to programming matters, including the status of women in the Secretariat and the review of the programme proposals for the Division for the Advancement of Women for the biennium 1996-1997. The proposals related to advancement of women found elsewhere in the programme budget were not being reviewed by the Commission at this time.

3. In the statement made by the representative from the Office of Human Resources Management of the United Nations Secretariat, reference was made to the Strategic Plan of Action for Improving the Status of Women in the Secretariat 1995-2000, which had been presented to the General Assembly at its

forty-ninth session and endorsed by the Assembly in its resolution 49/222. It was pointed out that despite an increase in the level of representation of women in the Secretariat over the previous few years, the pace had been rather slow, at an average of 1.8 per cent per year. It was also pointed out that if more concrete measures were not taken, 50-50 participation of men and women as mentioned in the draft Platform for Action (E/CN.6/1995/2) could not be achieved before the year 2008. At the moment, the number of women at the higher and top management levels reflected only a 15.1 per cent participation rate, which fell short of the target of 40 per cent. The measures proposed in the Strategic Plan of Action (1995-2000) were designed to accelerate significantly the pace of past gains and to reach the goal of gender equality in, or close to, the year 2000. With regard to the proposed measures, Governments could assist significantly in identifying women candidates, widely publicizing vacancies and maintaining updated rosters.

Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

4. Most representatives unanimously welcomed the Strategic Plan of Action (1995-2000) and urged its full and effective implementation by the Secretary-General. It was noted that the United Nations should take the lead and strive to close the gap between the number of men and the number of women at senior policy levels and in decision-making posts within the Organization. It was further noted that since its inception, the United Nations had consistently failed to reflect in its composition the fundamental principle contained in the Charter of the United Nations, namely, the equal rights of women and men.

5. One representative referred to the issue of sexual harassment within the United Nations system and maintained that efforts towards the prevention of sexual harassment must be addressed in the context of overall human resource reforms and reforms of the personnel systems.

6. It was maintained that the United Nations should be an effective vehicle for helping women to implement the global changes outlined in the draft Platform for Action. Efforts should be made to trim the bureaucracy and reduce overhead costs, and to dedicate more resources to programmes, particularly for women's empowerment. To this effect, steps should be taken to ensure that the United Nations programmes with portfolios specific to women were not duplicated.